

**SECRET**

mc o

88

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Office of Current Intelligence  
2 December 1965

## INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

## The Viet Cong Defection Rate\*

## Summary

The rate of defection among Viet Cong soldiers, which rose sharply in March, April, and May, leveled off between June and October. It may now be rising again. The number of Viet Cong turncoats still is relatively low.

1. From June 1964 until late February 1965, for every thousand soldiers in the Liberation Army, about 1.5 defected each month under the Chieu Hoi program. Between early March and late May 1965, the rate rose to five per thousand a month. On the basis of 27 days in November, the rate appears to be rising again; about 7.5 Viet Cong per thousand defected last month (see chart).

2. The March to May rate rise coincided with a large-scale step-up in commitment of US combat aircraft in South Vietnam. Prisoner interrogations suggest the expanded use of air power in part caused the rate rise. The increased use early this year of conscription by the Viet Cong and the employment of the draftees away from home may also partially explain the March to May rise. Although statistical breakdowns are not yet available, it is apparent that, as in other armies, Viet Cong conscripts are more disposed to defect than volunteers.

\* This memorandum is the second experimental product of an effort to provide a better and more current measure of Viet Cong morale. It is being circulated only within CIA. Comments are invited.

**ARMY review(s) completed.**

17

MOVIE

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

3. Why the defection rate leveled off in early June is difficult to determine. The Viet Cong may have grown more accustomed to air strikes, or may have taken additional steps to curtail defection. The increasing presence of the PAVN troops may also have served to stiffen southern backs for a time. The apparent increase in rate in November may be a reflection of the heightened intensity of fighting.

#### Notes on Method

4. To establish monthly rates of defection, the number of Chieu Hoi military defectors was applied to estimated Viet Cong strength figures. Both numbers are acknowledged to be rough.

5. Some military defectors are not listed under the Chieu Hoi program. Some tabulated by MACV as captives in battle would better be described as defectors. We do not believe the number is high, however. In any case, the rate of battlefield surrender has not risen in the last 17 months, which would seem to indicate that the number of this type of defector has not increased appreciably.

6. Margins of error in estimating Viet Cong strength are high and probably vary widely from period to period. Moreover, there is a time lag between the presence of a new Viet Cong unit and its confirmation by MACV. We have attempted in this memorandum to adjust earlier estimates of Viet Cong strength to reflect the presence then of Communist units confirmed only recently by MACV. Thus, the infantrymen of the 325th PAVN Division, whose presence in the south was confirmed by MACV in June and September, were added to the strength estimates of January and February, when the 325th is thought to have entered the south.

~~SECRET~~

\*\*\*

**\*\***

\*\*Based on 27 days in November.

STAT

Approved For Release 2005/06/01 : CIA-RDP79T00472A000600050018-2

Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

Approved For Release 2005/06/01 : CIA-RDP79T00472A000600050018-2